

MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

Success Stories from the Field

Norstar Specialty Foods Corp.

Impact Washington

Real Foods Sees Big Gains from Lean Project

Client Profile:

Real Foods, a subsidiary of Norstar Specialty Foods in Seattle, Washington, manufactures bakery products and non-frozen food products (specializing in salads and dry and canned soups). Real Foods' customers range from boutique supermarkets to large distribution-type warehouse stores. Real Foods employs 12 people.

Situation:

Real Foods/Norstar participated in the Lean for the Food Industry grant project which encompassed food processors from four western states - Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Nevada. The mission of this grant was to introduce Lean into the food processing industry, while at the same time, training hispanic workers on Lean to give them a path to more stable employment. The projects consisted of cultural awareness training for management, basic Lean ESL training for the hispanic workforce, Lean 101 (with a food simulation) for the general workforce, and targeted Kaizen events.

Solution:

Impact Washington, formerly known as Washington Manufacturing Services, a NIST MEP network affiliate, conducted an initial assessment and presented cultural awareness training to educate company management on how to deal with cultural differences and language barriers. Once completed, basic Lean concepts were taught to the Spanish-speaking workforce by an ESL instructor, preparing them in their own language for the Lean training which was all conducted in English. The third phase of the training was Lean 101 with a food simulation, which was conducted for all those participating in the Kaizen event. Finally, Impact Washington brought in Lean practitioner, Rick Baker, to conduct Kaizen events on several of Real Food's product lines.

A year later, the biggest benefit of the project is that the efforts conducted by Impact Washington have continued internally. Now, as part of the company culture, they film all setups to identify setup reduction opportunities. In addition, all new employees are trained in Lean principles when they are hired. They now profile all production by product families, allowing them to experience the greatest benefits from Lean principles.

Results:

- * Retained sales of \$300,000.
- * Eliminated 6 production tables.
- * Removed 40 production vats.

Testimonial:

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